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NO TO VIOLENCE!

Funeral Mass for Raúl Molina Cañas¹ 14 November 1977

Dear family members in mourning and beloved sisters and brothers.

Once again the church fulfills her duty as mother: she gathers up a new victim of violence, and with him in her arms she cries out, «No to violence!» and speaks a word of comfort to those who weep over this new assault on life.

The cathedral becomes once again a sign of this mother church who offers a tender word of love and comfort to those who have been orphaned and to those who weep over the separation that death causes. This word she offers is not some human word; it is the word of the One by whom all things were made. It is the eternal word repeated today just as it was by Jesus dying on the cross to give heaven to a man who asked for it: «Today you shall be with me in paradise» (Luke 23:43). For Christ it does not matter who turns to him to ask for forgiveness. What is important is the sincere desire to be converted to him. Before the grandeur of God how small human greatness appears!

This cathedral, unfortunately accustomed to gathering up the victims of bloodshed and assault, beholds the smallness of a person when enclosed within the four walls of a coffin. But no matter how small we seem, the church keeps her faith-filled eyes fixed on eternity. As she accompanies her son who leaves us, she continues on this earthly journey, and from the door of heaven that marks the boundary between life and death, the church looks back again toward earth and communicates a message from God to those of us still on our way. We have all come as pilgrims before the door of eternity to take leave of this beloved friend and brother. We wave him farewell as he enters the world beyond. And the prayer of the pilgrim people of God cannot be other than this: «Before you, Lord, there are no rights but only humble supplication. Beholding the humility of the coffin, we reflect on our own smallness. How tiny we are, but how great we are when we rely on your mercy and say, “Lord, have mercy!” Our prayer of supplication is for something great: we pray that this life that ends on earth, despite its sins and stains, may find a place in your heaven». Without a doubt, that Father who sent his Son not to condemn but to save now opens his loving arms to receive this soul that the whole people is commending to his mercy.

The scene here this afternoon is beautiful. We could not fit inside the cathedral, so we have improvised an altar here by the park in the midst of a large multitude. The body of this man who was murdered, whose most fundamental right—his life—was violated, takes on the voice of this people, and this voice is lifted up to God crying out,

¹ Raúl Molina Cañas, president of the Pan Lido firm, was assassinated 12 November 1977 while resisting an attempt to kidnap him.

«Lord, our presence here is above all a religious presence. Our presence is a supplication for the soul of our brother who until yesterday was our companion on this journey of life. Today he needs your mercy, and this whole people begs you to give him eternal rest and perpetual light. May a flood of comfort flow down from your throne of mercy on those who are orphaned by the death of this beloved brother, on his family, on those who shared his ideals, on his workers, and on all his friends, including all those who fill this plaza».

Through one man's sin death entered the world

And now, sisters and brothers, after praying for the deceased, the church turns again toward us pilgrims who have come to the door of eternity, and in the words of Saint Paul she speaks to us about the two great streams from which derive all that is good and all that is evil. We just heard that astute theology of Saint Paul: «Through one man's sin death entered into the world» (Rom 5:17a) and with death all the resulting forms of our mortal existence. It is not only natural death that is painful, but above all the violent death to which this man has fallen victim. Violence is the fruit of crime. Violence derives from sin, and sin is what enters the world when Adam and all we who are his descendents carry evil instincts within our hearts. Woe to those who do not repress those instincts in time!

What will become of us, my Salvadoran sisters and brothers, at this time when the instinct for murder and crime is washing over us like a wave in which there is no longer any social category that can feel secure. We are all exposed to violence. Even as we go responsibly about our work, we may be riddled with bullets. We are all exposed because this wave of evil has grown. No one has caused it—through the first crime sin entered into the world, but we can still...²

Through Christ's holiness salvation entered the world

At the same time, sisters and brothers, Saint Paul presents us with the positive side of life: just as sin—murder, violence, and every crime—entered the world through one sinful man, so through the holiness of Christ, the Son of God, redemption and life have entered the world (Rom 5:12,17b). This tragic event in our history summons us to undertake the task of making sure there is no more crime and no more violence.

If we really are what we say we are: «sisters and brothers», then let us work to create love and peace—not some superficial peace and love of sentiments and appearances, but love and peace deeply rooted in justice. Without justice there is no true love; without justice there is no true peace. Therefore, if we want to follow the path of goodness that bonds us with Christ, let us uproot from our hearts the evil instincts that lead us to this violence and these crimes. Let us try to sow in our own hearts and in the hearts of those dear to us life, love, and peace, but peace and love based on justice.

Therefore, sisters and brothers, in this doorway of eternity, as we gaze toward the beyond, we see our brother who leaves us, and we bid him farewell. Now he turns toward us with this church that brings the voice of Christ and proclaims, «Brothers and

² There is an interruption in the taped recording of the homily.

sisters, no more victims of violence! May I be the last victim to shed blood in the streets. May this be a lesson for all of you: love one another» (John 15:12). Let it be so.